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Ministry of Natural Resources's
Action Plan on Forest Management

In his Audit of Management of the Crown Forests of Ontario, Dean Gordon Baskerville found that in general the structure for managing the Crown forest is "adequate", and that the ministry has the technical expertise to address the issues raised.

However, he identified certain administrative and technical issues which were posing obstacles to effective forest management in Ontario. We will make a number of changes to address Dean Baskerville's comments, which we have found very valuable in our ongoing refinement of our forest management program.

Overall, Dean Baskerville indicated five major areas requiring action. His findings are summarized below:

- The need to ensure that the province is getting the best end use from its timber. This relates to the present use of merchantable timber and also future supply.
- The need to ensure that current silvicultural practices are contributing to the accomplishment of specified management targets, and that the budget for silvicultural purposes (regeneration and tending) is being spent in a manner that would give the best return on investment.
- The need to ensure that non-timber values (i.e. other uses of the forest, such as wildlife habitat or recreation/tourism) are managed toward measurable and quantifiable objectives.
- A need to ensure that the distinction between managing the resource and administering to the management of the resource is clear, and that the level of accountability and responsibility of the unit forester is clarified.
- A need to re-establish confidence in the ministry's Forest Resources Inventory (FRI) which is used in current forest management planning.

This action plan provides added direction for the management of forests in Ontario.

Issue:

Ontario must be assured it is getting the best end use of its timber -- specifically what stands are to be cut, where and for what purpose, and the matter of future supply.

Action:

The Ontario Wood Supply Model which the ministry uses to determine harvest levels will be modified to provide improved local projections. This tool will be at the disposal of all field foresters by December 1987.

While emphasizing that area control of harvesting is appropriate, Dean Baskerville repeatedly pointed out a need for clearer relationships between areas and timber volumes. This need applies to both the existing natural forest and the regenerated new forest.

Area/volume information for the existing natural forest, specific to the management unit level, will be in place by December 1987.


The ministry has already initiated the first phase of a project on the regenerated new forest. In 1984, ministry staff began a systematic survey of all artificially regenerated forests in the province to determine their areas, species and growth. This has been completed for approximately 70 per cent of these forests.

This survey is now being expanded to cover the rest of the province and targeted for completion by December 1988. The results will form the basis for the establishment of improved growth/yield information for managing Ontario's new forests, thereby achieving a more realistic estimate of future supply.

These actions will not only address existing weaknesses, but also provide industry, the public and government with a better understanding of our present and future timber supply situation.

Another issue centres on timber utilization to achieve the best end use -- selecting the wood to be harvested in each unit, matching supply to demand and determining the nature and location of surpluses. We have already consulted with foresters from the public, academic and private sectors on this issue.

A group of MNR and forest industry persons has been assigned the task, under the chairmanship of Dr. James Kayll, Director of Forestry at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, to establish more detailed criteria for forest stand allocation which will ensure that sawlogs, pulpwood and other quality products go to the most appropriate mills. Dr. Kayll will report to the Deputy Minister by July 1, 1987.



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On the broader question of wood flow patterns, the ministry has just completed a major study on mill demand and timber supply across northern Ontario, including Algonquin region. The information from this wood flow study, together with the report of Dr. Kayll's committee, will have a significant influence on decisions related to timber supply and the flow of products.

As well, our management planning requires strong economic criteria for deciding which cutover lands should be regenerated and how this should be carried out. In establishing these criteria, we must consider location, extent, access, soil productivity, type of forest to be produced, impact on non-timber values, as well as management objectives. Four workshops have already been held to train 75 field foresters in how to make these evaluations. Two further workshops will be completed by the end of this year.

Issue:

Dean Baskerville found the need to improve links between the objectives of the forest management units and the actual work carried out, and between unit objectives and budget.

Action:

To address this concern, beginning in 1987, all new timber management plans will contain clear statements of objectives that are measurable and attainable. Clear, concise and specific objectives will allow us to do more effective assessments on each unit every five years.

It will now be possible to establish a clear link between the objectives, actions and related budgets at the local, regional and provincial levels. We recognize this linkage is essential to ensure that our resources are well managed, both now and in future.

A new forest production policy will be developed. It will take into account these objectives, the supply capability of Ontario's forests at the unit level and the present and future demands of industry. Our strategy will be to direct our management and financial resources toward intensive management on specific areas where there is high return, with the application of extensive forest management generally throughout the province. Given the intense and varied input required, the target date for completion of this new policy is October 1988.

Ontario has a significant position in world forest production. We must compete in those markets in ways which will afford Ontario the best return on investment. The ministry has initiated a comprehensive study of the economic condition of Ontario's forest industry to be undertaken by a consultant and completed by September 1987.

A Review of the Competitiveness of Northern Ontario Industries was recently prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Industry, Trade and Technology to provide an overview of forestry, mining, steel and secondary industries. The study commissioned by the Ministry of Natural Resources will provide detailed information concerning the forest industry.

In a world in which markets and technology are rapidly changing, this study will give us a comprehensive picture of the economic state of the forest industry, what competition we are facing and what our major markets may be in the future. This will provide an essential building block for a new forest production policy.

Issue:

The effects of timber management on other uses of the forest -- the need for quantified objectives for non-timber values, the treatment of non-timber values as constraints to timber management design, and the need for measurable cause-and-effect relationships between timber management actions and non-timber values.

Action:

It is the ministry's job to plan forestry, fisheries, wildlife and other natural resource programs. Objectives for these individual resources are now stated in separate plans, often developed on different land bases. The ministry accepts the need to improve linkages and to eliminate unjustified overlaps.

We recognize that there may be constraints on timber management simply because of the varied resources we plan for, and the public's often conflicting expectations from these different resources.

Present knowledge about relationships between timber management activities and other major uses of the forest area are included in ministry guidelines for the protection of tourism values, fisheries habitat and moose habitat.

Within the next year, the ministry will conduct an examination into how we can better measure the effects of timber management on other resources. This will enable us to establish more clearly the cause-and-effect relationships Dean Baskerville found lacking.

Issue:

A need to ensure that an "administrative mindset" is not sustained within the ministry, and to designate the unit forester as the responsible and accountable manager of forest management units.

Action:

A new Timber Management Planning system came into effect in Ontario in January 1986. The first draft plans prepared under this new system are being submitted now. The ministry, including senior management and field personnel, will be vigilant in ensuring that the bureaucratic problems that Dean Baskerville identified do not persist under this revitalized planning process.

A systematic approach to management planning is necessary. However, the process need not -- and must not -- stifle innovation.

While it is the District Manager's responsibility to ensure that all management plans take into account various resource users and uses, there is no doubt who is the professional responsible for preparing and carrying out the management plan -- the unit forester.

In Ontario, the management unit is the basis for designing, reporting and evaluating forest management. The role of the unit forester is crucial to the success of the province's forest management program.

We must improve our communication of this expectation to staff within the ministry and to the public in general. We have already taken steps to do so by making this expectation known to all Regional Directors and District Managers through regional management committee meetings held throughout the province.

Within the next 12 months, new criteria will be established to determine levels of responsibility, accountability and progressive career development for ministry foresters. The performance of unit foresters will be evaluated regularly, and they will be accountable for the management unit.

To ensure that the accountability for management units is well-defined within the ministry, all Forest Management Agreements and Crown Units will be under the full-time responsibility of unit foresters by the beginning of 1988.

The Dean of Forestry at the University of Toronto, the Director of Forestry at Lakehead University, and the Dean of the Ontario Agriculture College at the University of Guelph have already been asked to advise us on appropriate training that can be offered for upgrading our practising professionals. This is vital in light of rapidly changing technology.

It should be noted that, in Ontario, professional foresters in the private sector play a major role in effective forest management and, consequently, we will make our training also available to them.

To give renewed emphasis to the importance of the technical, scientific and professional aspects of forestry and to provide the ministry with leadership in these areas, we are establishing the position of Provincial Forester reporting to the Deputy Minister.

Mr. Ken Armson, Executive Co-ordinator of the ministry's Forest Resources Group, will assume this position effective November 1, 1986. Mr. Dennis Schafer, currently Director of the ministry's southwestern region, will assume Mr. Armson's former position.

Issue:

The accuracy of the ministry's Forest Resources Inventory (FRI) has been questioned publicly. Dean Baskerville said the FRI was a reasonable base as used in current forest management planning, but he suggested that the credibility issue should be laid to rest.

Action:

We believe Ontario's forests are well managed and that there will be ample timber for generations to come. But among some members of the public, there remains doubt about the accuracy of the ministry's figures.

In view of this, individuals from industry, environmental groups and the academic sector have been asked to tell us how best to obtain a definitive assessment of the ministry's inventory figures, and to recommend a process for verifying the accuracy of the FRI on an ongoing basis.

This group will be chaired by Dr. Robert Rosehart, President of Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, and will include: Greg Sheehy, Conservation Director of the Canadian Nature Federation, Ottawa; Gerry Seed, Vice-President, Woodlands, Great Lakes Forest Products Ltd., Thunder Bay; J. R. Carrow, Dean of Forestry, University of Toronto and President of the Canadian Institute of Forestry; Monte Hummell, Director of the World Wildlife Fund (Canada), Toronto, and Professor Brian Allen, a bio-statistician from the University of Guelph.

Conclusion:

In his report, Dean Baskerville challenged this ministry to give the issues which he raised some thoughtful review. This action plan is the result of a careful review of his concerns.

Dean Baskerville called for specific solutions "that are appropriate to the real problems". We are confident that the changes outlined in this action plan will lead to an improved system of forest management in Ontario.

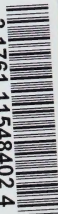
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SUMMARY OF MINISTRY ACTION PLAN ON FOREST MANAGEMENT

1. The Ontario Wood Supply Model, which the ministry uses to determine harvest levels, will be modified to provide improved local projections and will be at the disposal of all field foresters by December 1987.
2. Information on timber volumes for areas of the existing natural forest, specific to the management unit level, will be available by December 1987.
3. A current survey of the new, regenerated forest to determine areas, species and growth will be expanded to cover the whole province. The target date for completion is December 1988.
4. A group of ministry and forest industry officials under the chairmanship of Dr. James Kayll, Director of Forestry at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, will establish more detailed criteria for forest stand allocation to ensure the best timber utilization. That report will be received by July 1, 1987.
5. The ministry has just completed a major study on mill demand and timber supply across northern Ontario, including Algonquin region. Information from this wood flow study will be used in conjunction with Dr. Kayll's report.
6. A series of workshops are under way to train field foresters to use economic criteria in decisions on lands to be regenerated.
7. Beginning in 1987, all new timber management plans will contain clear statements of objectives that are measurable and attainable.
8. A new forest production policy, taking into account those new objectives, the supply capability of Ontario's forests and the demands of industry, will be developed and completed by October 1988.
9. A comprehensive study of the economic condition of Ontario's forest industry will be undertaken by a consultant and completed by September 1987.
10. The ministry will conduct an examination into the effects of timber management practices on non-timber values such as wildlife habitat and tourism.

11. Senior ministry management is taking steps to communicate to all forestry staff that systematic management planning should not be allowed to impede innovation, and that the role of the unit forester is crucial to the success of the forest management program.
12. New criteria for levels of responsibility, accountability and progressive career development for ministry foresters will be developed within the next 12 months. Unit foresters will be accountable for the forest management unit.
13. A notable panel of academics in the forestry field will advise the ministry on appropriate training for upgrading practising forestry professionals.
14. To ensure that accountability for forest management units is well-defined within the ministry, all Forest Management Agreements (FMAs) and Crown Management Units (CMUs) will be the responsibility of full-time unit foresters by the beginning of 1988.
15. To provide leadership in professional and scientific forestry practices within the ministry, the new position of Provincial Forester has been created.
16. A group headed by Dr. Robert Rosehart, President of Lakehead University, will evaluate the ministry's Forest Resources Inventory, or FRI, and recommend a process for verifying it on an ongoing basis. The group will include academics, environmentalists and forest industry representatives.

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